



Search



Menu

Rise in hateful rhetoric in games

By [Take This](#) · January 17th, 2024 · [Announcements](#), [Expert Content](#), [Video Games](#)

Content warning: examples of hate speech, calls for violence, and comments

AUTHORS: Rachel Kowert, *Take This* || Elizabeth Kilmer, *Take This* || Alex S Nelson, *Logically* || Alex Newhouse, *CTEC*

Since the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, there has been a well-documented increase in anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim rhetoric across the globe. Games are no exception.

While gaming spaces are often thought of simply as places for play, they have grown in scope and influence over the last several decades as places where cultures are both shaped and reflected. Today, online gaming spaces and their adjacent platforms (e.g., Discord, Twitch) are some of the most popular places to connect with others. Today, gaming spaces (both in-game and adjacent) have become a cornerstone of the global information ecosystem and influential in shaping and amplifying global discourse. What happens in games, doesn't stay in games – it crosses across in-game to out-of-game contexts.

One such example of this is the rise in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate speech within online gaming communities over the last few months.

Over the last year, Take This, The Center for Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism at Middlebury College, and Logically AI have been using combined tools and capabilities to identify online content that represent various types of hate speech and potential domestic extremist activity within the online gaming community [as part of the two-year project funded by the Department of Homeland Security examining the state of extremism in games](#). In order to assess the rhetoric among gaming communities, the focus was placed on websites that are specifically focused on gaming (e.g., Steam Community Blog) or websites that have a significant amount of discourse about games and gaming (e.g., 4chan). Data is collected by using social listening tools configured to identify words and phrases that represent various types of hate speech and domestic

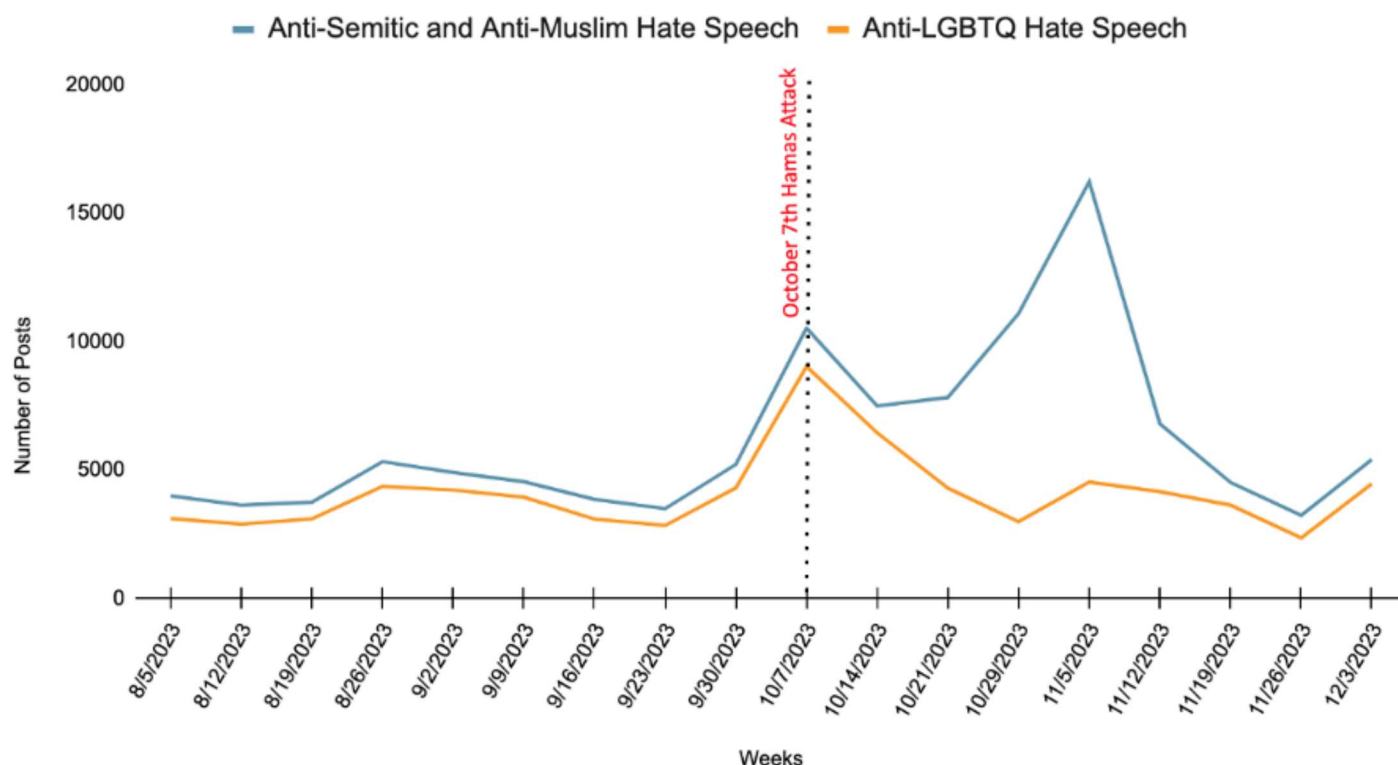
extremism within the online gaming community. We observed content that represents the online gaming community by filtering for content that mentions games or is from a website about games.

It is important to note that while the focus of this work is game adjacent spaces, both in-game and game-adjacent platforms are reflections of each other. As such, discourse occurring on adjacent platforms can be considered reflective of the broader context both in- and out-of gaming spaces and gaming communities.

Following the events of October 7, Logically focused on data looking specifically at antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate speech. Antsemitic hate speech is any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to Jewish people. Anti-Muslim hate speech is any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to Muslim people.

Since October 7, there has been an approximate **186%** increase in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate speech within the online gaming community in game-adjacent platforms. Notably, the volume of anti-LGBTQ hate speech, which is one of the most frequently observed types of hate speech within the online gaming community, remained roughly the same in the post-October 7 time period. Taken together, this indicates that **anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hate speech within the online gaming community has been significantly influenced by the October 7 attacks and subsequent Israel-Hamas war.**

Hate Speech Trends in the Online Gaming Community



It is important to note, that when analyzed individually, the level of antisemitic, anti-Muslim, and Anti-LGBTQ hate speech are all roughly the same post-October 7. However, given that the increase in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate speech have both been driven by the Israel-Hamas War, they are combined in the graph above them to illustrate the impact that the Israel-Hamas War has had on the type of hate speech circulating among the online gaming community.

These types of hate speech were observed most frequently in the following game-adjacent platforms and websites with significant discourse about gaming:

1. 4Chan (www.4chan.org)
2. Steam Community Blog (www.steamcommunity.com)
3. World Star (www.worldstarhiphop.com)
4. ResetEra (www.resetera.com)
5. Incels.is (www.incels.is)
6. Minecraft Forum (www.minecraftforum.net)
7. Blizzard Forums (e.g., us.forums.blizzard.com/en/wow/)
8. DSOGaming (www.dsogaming.com)

Five of the top eight sites are specific to gaming: Steam Community Blog, ResetEra, Minecraft Forum, Blizzard Forum, and DSOGaming. While 4Chan, World Star, and Incel.is are not gaming specific sites, they do contain significant discourse about gaming.

The combination of more niche and mainstream platforms makes this particularly concerning, as it indicates these discussions are not only widespread but within reach of even casual visitors of gaming-related forums.

This hateful rhetoric can have real-world consequences. Language produces conventions, and conventions produce behavioral norms. Research has found violent offline action can lead to an increase in online hate speech. Similarly, online hate speech offline has been found to fuel hateful offline actions, creating a so called “cycle of violence”. Knowing this, it is perhaps unsurprising that there has also been a rise in both calls for and real-world violence against Jewish and Muslim individuals. According to the FBI, hate crime cases have increased by [60% since October 7](#).

As we continue to examine gaming and gaming adjacent spaces as spaces of cultural importance, [we need to remain mindful that they reflect broader societal trends as a reflection of shared values](#) but also have the power to mold and shape them. Games are not only spaces to play and commune, they are spaces where we learn, grow, and shape our perceptions of the world around us. Understanding this is critical to understanding the importance of these trends and not discrediting them as “something that is happening online,” but rather something that is reflecting and shaping the way we see and interact with the wider world.

Content warning: examples of hate speech, calls for violence, and comments below

► **Harmful Stereotype and Narrative Examples**

► **Call for Violence against Jewish and Muslim Individuals Examples**

► **Trending Hashtag and Phrase Examples**

Blog

Announcements

Conventions

COVID

Events

Expert Content

Research

Support

Video Games

White Papers



9805 NE 116th St
Suite 7411
Kirkland, WA 98034

Take This, Inc. 2021
EIN: 46-3882735



Take This is a mental health nonprofit decreasing stigma and increasing support for mental health in games.

We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit mental health organization providing comprehensive resources and support that is tailored for the unique needs of the game development community and embraces the diverse cultures and issues of the game community. We combine clinical best practice with a love of all things gamer, providing a safe, accepting space for gamers and developers. We work in a spirit of partnership with other organizations addressing these issues among game enthusiasts, streamers, and creators.

[Find Resources](#)[Donate](#)

[Recent Press](#) • [Contact Us](#) • [Sitemap](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [Terms of Service](#) • ©2024 Take This